

Association for Information Systems AIS Electronic Library (AISeL)

ICIS 1997 Proceedings

International Conference on Information Systems
(ICIS)

December 1997

Panel 11 The Rhetoric, Reality, and Future of the Relationship Dimension in Information Technology Outsourcing

Thomas Kern
University of Oxford

Vijay Gurbaxani
University of California, Irvine

Mary Lacity
University of Missouri, St. Louis

John Harris
Electronic Data Systems Corporation

Follow this and additional works at: <http://aisel.aisnet.org/icis1997>

Recommended Citation

Kern, Thomas; Gurbaxani, Vijay; Lacity, Mary; and Harris, John, "Panel 11 The Rhetoric, Reality, and Future of the Relationship Dimension in Information Technology Outsourcing" (1997). *ICIS 1997 Proceedings*. 72.
<http://aisel.aisnet.org/icis1997/72>

This material is brought to you by the International Conference on Information Systems (ICIS) at AIS Electronic Library (AISeL). It has been accepted for inclusion in ICIS 1997 Proceedings by an authorized administrator of AIS Electronic Library (AISeL). For more information, please contact elibrary@aisnet.org.

PANEL 11

THE RHETORIC, REALITY, AND FUTURE OF THE RELATIONSHIP DIMENSION IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY OUTSOURCING

Chair: **Thomas Kern**, University of Oxford

Panelists: **Vijay Gurbaxani**, University of California, Irvine
Mary Lacity, University of Missouri, St. Louis
John R. Harris, Electronic Data Systems Corporation

The tremendous growth in IT outsourcing over the past years warrants further detailed academic study and attention to the best ways of handling outsourcing arrangements. In the past academics and practitioners have paid much attention to the advantages and disadvantages of IT outsourcing, to the evaluation of IT outsourcing, to a company's outsourcing strategy, and to the legal issues, but little research has looked at the post-contract management agenda and the client and vendor relationship. From research in non-IS as well as IS sources, it is evident that the contract prescribes initially the operation of the outsourcing deal, but its operationalization really only comes about through cooperating. Thus, the formation, development, sustainment, and decay of dyadic relationships is inherent to outsourcing, at individual, group, department, and inter-firm levels. However, while these relationships are perennially acclaimed by academics and practitioners alike as central to outsourcing success, we are still unclear as to the role they play, the characteristics of an effective relationship, the circumstances in which they arise, and how to build an outsourcing relationship. Research shows that the rhetoric on relationship building, particularly in major outsourcing deals, has been high, but the reality less impressive.

Key academics and practitioners who have been studying or actively involved in IT outsourcing have been invited to discuss their findings and experiences in relation to the panel's topic. The panel seeks to explore and address (1) the role of the relationship dimension in different types of outsourcing arrangements (e.g., selective, total, and alliances) in the United States and United Kingdom, (2) the characteristics of an outsourcing relationship, (3) how client and vendor organizations have (differently or similarly) pursued post-contract management and the outsourcing relationship, and (4) the dimensions that have been found to assure a win-win situation. Panelists will be asked to discuss the issues with a strong focus on industry practice, with possible case study examples. From this, the panel will then seek to address a major but neglected area and begin to identify the important dimensions of relationships and their formation and development. It will discuss whether IT outsourcing has characteristics that make relationship building different from other IT and non-IT contexts. It will focus on the mechanisms, processes, and training that vendors and their client companies will need to operationalize the contract, if the relationship dimension is to yield in the future what all too often it has not seemed to deliver on in past IT outsourcing arrangements.